



GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE

Unseen Poetry Higher Tier – Revision Booklet

Write about both poems and their effect on you. Show how they are similar and how they are different.

You may write about each poem separately and then compare them, or make comparisons where appropriate in your answer as a whole. [20]

Dawn Revisited

Imagine you wake up
with a second chance: The blue jay*
hawks his pretty wares*
and the oak still stands, spreading
glorious shade. If you don't look back,

the future never happens.
How good to rise in sunlight,
in the prodigal smell of biscuits –
eggs and sausage on the grill.
The whole sky is yours

to write on, blown open
to a blank page. Come on,
shake a leg! You'll never know
who's down there, frying those eggs,
if you don't get up and see.

Rita Dove

From 'On the Bus With Rosa Parks'
(W.W. Norton & Company)

**blue jay – a type of bird.*

**hawks his pretty wares – draws attention to itself.*

Carpe Diem*

From my study window
I see you
below in the garden, a hand
here pruning
or leaning across to snip
a wayward shoot;

a daub of powder-blue in a
profusion of green,
then next moment, you are
no longer there –
only to reappear, this time
perfectly framed

in dappling sunlight, with
an armful of ivy
you've trimmed, topped by
hyacinth blooms,
fragrant survivors of last
night's frost.

And my heart misses a beat
at love for you,
knowing a time will come
when you are
no longer there, nor I here
to watch you

on a day of such simplicity.
Meantime let us
make sure we clasp each
shared moment
in cupped hands, like water
we dare not spill.

Stewart Conn

From 'The Breakfast Room'
(Bloodaxe Books, 2010)

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Considering the Snail

The snail pushes through a green night, for the grass is heavy with water and meets over the bright path he makes, where rain has darkened the earth's dark. He moves in a wood of desire,

pale antlers barely stirring as he hunts. I cannot tell what power is at work, drenched there with purpose, knowing nothing. What is a snail's fury? All I think is that if later

I parted the blades above the tunnel and saw the thin trail of broken white across litter, I would never have imagined the slow passion to that deliberate progress.

Thom Gunn

A Gull

A seagull stood on my window ledge today, said nothing, but had a good look inside. That was a cold inspection I can tell you! North winds, icebergs, flash of salt crashed through the glass without a sound. He shifted from leg to leg, swivelled his head. There was not a fish in the house – only me. Did he smell my flesh, that white one? Did he think I would soon open the window and scatter bread? Calculation in those eyes is quick. 'I tell you, my chick, there is food *everywhere*.' He eyed my furniture, my plants, an apple. Perhaps he was a mutation, a supergull. Perhaps he was, instead, a visitation which only used that tight firm forward body to bring the waste and dread of open waters, foundered voyages, matchless predators, into a dry room. I knew nothing. I moved; I moved an arm. When the thing saw the shadow of that, it suddenly flapped, scuttered claws along the sill, and was off, silent still. Who would be next for those eyes, I wondered, and were they ready, and in order?

Edwin Morgan

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A Child's Sleep

I stood at the edge of my child's sleep
hearing her breathe;
although I could not enter there,
I could not leave.

Her sleep was a small wood,
perfumed with flowers;
dark, peaceful, sacred,
acred in hours.

And she was the spirit that lives
in the heart of such woods;
without time, without history,
wordlessly good.

I spoke her name,
pebble dropped in the still night
and saw her stir, open both palms
cupping their soft light.

Then went to the window.
The greater dark
outside the room
gazed back, maternal, wise,
with its face of moon.

Carol Ann Duffy

Night feed

This is dawn
Believe me
This is your season, little daughter.
The moment daisies open,
The hour mercurial* rainwater
Makes a mirror for sparrows.
It's time we drowned our sorrows.

I tiptoe in.
I lift you up
Wriggling
In your rosy, zipped sleeper.
Yes, this is the hour
For the early bird and me
When finder is keeper.

I crook the bottle.
How you suckle!
This is the best I can be,
Housewife
To this nursery
Where you hold on,
Dear life.

A silt* of milk.
The last suck
And now your eyes are open,
Birth-coloured and offended.
Earth wakes.
You go back to sleep.
The feed is ended.

Worms turn.
Stars go in.
Even the moon is losing face.
Poplars* stilt for dawn.
And we begin
The long fall from grace.
I tuck you in.

Eavan Boland

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In Cardigan Market

Auntie Jane Fish, they call her. She is rough,
Rawboned, fat, toothless, fifteen stone of grin
And grumble. Her voice cuts the market din
Like a saw on a nail. She stinks enough
Of fish to change the colour of the light.
Her phosphorescent flesh's steaming glow
Drips female sweat and friendship. Traders know
Men come for miles and buy from morn till night.
Daily she sells the princely salmon, trout,
The vulgar herring and the vicious eel
With ancient eyes, lobsters black from the creel,
All fresh, all caught before the stars went out.
All day she squats here, nodding her big head,
Richly alive among the silvery dead.

Brian Morris

Car Showroom

Day after day, along with his placid
automobiles, that well-groomed
sallow young man had been waiting for
me, as in the cheerful, unchanging
weather of a billboard – pacing
the tiles, patting his tie, knotting, un-
knotting the façade of his smile
while staring out the window.
He was so bad at the job
he reminded me of myself
the summer I failed
at selling *Time* and *Life*
in New Jersey.
Even though I was a boy
I could feel someone else's voice
crawl out of my mouth,
spoil every word,
like this cowed, polite kid in his tie
and badge that said *Greg*,
saying *Ma'am* to my wife, calling
me *Sir*, retailing the air with such piety
I had to find anything out the window.
Maybe the rain. It was gray
and as honestly wet as ever. Something
we could both believe.

Jonathan Holden

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Poem 1: The Beach

Weldon Kees

Squat, unshaven, full of gas,
Joseph Samuels, former clerk
in four large cities, out of work,
waits in the darkened underpass.

In sanctuary, out of reach,
he stares at the fading light outside:
the rain beginning; hears the tide
that drums along the empty beach.

When drops first fell at six o'clock,
the bathers left. The last car's gone.
Sun's final rays reflect upon
the streaking rain, the rambling dock.

He takes an object from his coat
and holds it tightly in his hand
(eyes on the stretch of endless sand).
And then, in darkness, cuts his throat.

Poem 2: Beach Sand

Raymond A. Foss

Maybe it is the memories
the change of pace that brings us there
the sense of vacation
maybe the smell of the place
the sights of the gulls, the dunes, the grasses
but oh it is the feel of it,
the crunch and slide of it
the feeling of beach sand
so different from dirt, soil, loam
no, not earthy, moist, rich,
but oh so granular and gritty
even when wet,
moveable paper spreading under toes
sliding beneath the soles
smoothing my skin
clearing my mind
unburdening me of the rest
drawing me to the tactile, the feel
of beach sand

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Rejection

Rejection is orange
Not, as one might think,
Grey and nondescript.
It is the vivid orange of
A council worker's jacket.
A coat of shame that says
'he doesn't want you.'

Rejection tastes like ashes
Acrid, bitter.
It sounds
Like the whisper of voices
Behind my back.
'He didn't want her.
He dumped her.'
It feels
Like the scraping of fingernails
On a blackboard,
Not ache or stab of pain
But like having
a layer of skin missing.
Rejection looks like - me,
I suppose.

Slightly leftover
Like the last, curled sandwich
When all the guests
Have gone.

Jenny Sullivan.

Years Ago

It was what we did not do that I remember,
places with no markers left by us,
All of a summer, meeting every day,
A memorable summer of hot days,
Day after day of them, evening after evening.
Sometimes we would laze

Upon the river-bank, just touching hands
Or stroking one another's arms with grasses.
Swans floated by seeming to assert
Their dignity. But we too had our own
Decorum* in the small-change of first love.

Nothing was elegiac* or nostalgic,
We threw time in the river as we threw
Breadcrumbs to an inquisitive duck, and so
Day entered evening with a sweeping gesture,
Idly we talked of food and where to go.

This is the love that I knew long ago.
Before possession, passion, and betrayal.

Elizabeth Jennings.

**Decorum* - suitable behaviour

**elegiac* - mournful or sad